FREE EAST TIMOR JAPAN COALITION

TL1153

June 28, 1990

Mr. Ali Alatas
Foreign Minister
Republic of Indonesia

Dear Mr. Alatas,

May we take the occassion of your visit to express our regard for your untiring efforts to achieve a peaceful settlement of the Cambodia conflict and to welcome you to Japan.

We are Japanese citizens concerned about the armed invasion of the former Portuguese colony of East Timor in December, 1975 by the Republic of Indonesia. We wish to make a request with respect to the territory of East Timor, still under Indonesian occupation. We ask that you work to bring your country to the peace table, together with representatives of the East Timorese, in order to achieve a peaceful solution to the East Timor issue.

It is believed that as many as 200,000 people may have lost their lives in East Timor since the 1975 invasion. The United Nations General Assembly, which repeatedly passed resolutions affirming the right of the East Timorese to self-determination, passed a resolution in 1982 calling for a solution to the issue through consultations involving all of the concerned parties. While we can acknowledge some value in the consultations that have been taking place under the auspices of Secretary General de Cuellar between Indonesia and the former administrating country, Portugal, it is greatly regretable that the party most concerned, the East Timorese, are not included.

In February 1989 Bishop Belo, the leader of the East Timorese Catholic Church, wrote to the UN secretary general and asked that a fair referendum be held in East Timor under UN auspices. Also, the two main East Timorese parties that were in conflict in August 1975, Fretilin and UDT, formed an alliance, the National Convergence, in March 1986. This National Convergence has stated that it seeks, not a military solution, but a political solution achieved by means of peace talks. It too calls for the holding of a national referendum under UN supervision.

We have learned that a large-scale military operation was launched by the Indonesian army in East Timor in March of this year and are deeply concerned that yet more blood

will be spilt there. It has been suggested that this military operation is for the purpose of crushing the Fretilin leadership before the visit of a Portuguese delegation to East Timor evidently being discussed for this fall. Minister for Defense and Security General Benny Murdani said in a speech in the capital of East Timor, Dili, on February 3 that anti-Indonesian forces would be completely crushed. The following day an Australian journalist witnessed an influx of thousands of fresh Indonesian troops in Dili. Another traveler was told that massacres of villagers by Indonesian troops had been taking place in the southwestern areas of Ainaro and Bobonaro since Easter. Some one hundred villagers, women and children included, were reportedly massacred in the village of Lour, southwest of Ainaro, by troops of Unit 712. A village near Oeda was reportedly burnt to the ground. Movements in mid-May travel in the southwestern part of East Timor was said to be restricted.

We fervently hope that, in keeping with those two pillars of the United Nations, the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, that your country, which has a glorious history of struggle against [illegible] self-determination on the part of the East Timorese, who have suffered under colonial rule since the 16th century.

With respect to efforts in Japan, we can report that in August 1989 Bishop Aloisius N. Soma of the Japanese Catholic Council for Justice and Peace went to New York to present a petition on behalf of East Timor to the United Nations Decolonization Committee. He took with him a letter to the UN secretary general supporting Bishop Belo's request for a referendum signed by some 1200 Catholic leaders in the Asia-Pacific region. A Diet member representing the Diet Forum on East Timor, a supra-partisan group of 87 representatives in both houses of the Diet, also petitioned the Decolonization Committee and called for peace talks among all the concerned parties as did a representative of the Free East Timor Japan Coalition, a coalition of nine East Timor support groups throughout Japan.

We believe that it is a marvelous thing when the people of Asia can work together for peace in a conflict area in the region. We end with a solemn promise to work for a greater contribution on the part of the Japanese government to the achievement of peace in East Timor.

With all good wishes for your health and the success of your endeavors,

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